

suggests phenomena contributing to ultimate doom. Yet along the way, he still cannot resist the corny pun and malapropism, hence the title: *The Winner of Our DisContent: Writing Between the Lines*.

Dressed in a tuxedo and rubber skull cap with attached grey hair to summon the cliché of the balding science professor, Pomeroy activated one device after another, periodically injecting ironic verbal commentary while images of Pentagon-related news articles were projected on the wall. Indeed, the performance resembled a warped "Mr. Science" program, with several things going on simultaneously. Setting the tone immediately, he opened by holding an industrial-strength blower which kept a plastic-beach-ball model of Earth aloft with an upward force of air; he was obviously referring to the precarious world situation. Throughout the performance an actual science demonstration proceeded unaltered. Two large tin cans with a little water were heated by burners. After the water vapor inside was sufficiently hot, the flames were doused, and as the vapor cooled, the pressure differential caused the cans to collapse into themselves, a literal reference to Jean Baudrillard's apocalyptic implosion concept.

The most memorable devices successfully synthesized form, motion and sound in achieving metaphors of destruction. Several toy armored tanks were placed on three stacked circular tracks hanging from the ceiling like the Sword of Damocles. As they ran around in circles producing whirring noises, they looked both threatening and absurd. The colander wired for sound made variously



Jim Pomeroy

pitched wails depending upon its position maneuvered by Pomeroy. Here he transformed a mundane kitchen object into a menacing flying weapon, leading us to speculate whether UFOs are actually government-sponsored projects. Cardboard tubes attached to a spinning armature and a vacuum cleaner blowing instead of sucking constituted Pomeroy's "Turbo Panpipes." The noise of the vacuum cleaner and "tune" created by spinning tubes resulted in cacophony, signifying the opposite of real panpipe music from a non-nuclear time. He added this groaner: "Is there sound in a vacuum? There is if you fill it!"

At first glance, these tricks seem simple-minded, but they manifest an anxiety nervously asserting itself. Compared to the sledgehammer approach of Survival Research Laboratories, Pomeroy depended more on viewers' imaginations, suggesting the transformation of ordinary objects taken to their logical and frightening extremes. In this regard, his projected news images almost appeared superfluous.

Alfred Jan

ANTHONY BRAXTON HASSAN AL FALAK RICHARD BATTLE

"FOUR PERSPECTIVES: CONCEPTUAL VISION"

CitiCentre Dance Theatre, Oakland, CA

June 14, 1986

It was with great anticipation that I attended the *Four Perspectives* program, a collaboration including old favorites, new friends and fresh hopefuls. The combination of multi-instrumentalist, composer/conductor Anthony Braxton with, choreographer Hassan al Falak, designer Richard Battle and members of the CitiCentre Dance Theatre promised an evening of innovative avant-garde works.

The resulting creation was probably music-heavy, with dance close behind; at least those contributions seemed more accomplished and polished. Battle's set, a stationary, cave-invoking tarp, was less successful conceptually than his costuming, which sparkled, especially his street-stylings worn by the company in al Falak's finale, *sweep/spiral/thrash*.

Collaboration #1 featured al Falak and Braxton, with Braxton in Ben Franklin glasses and blue-knit well-worn sweater impishly playing a caprice of notes while al Falak appeared, like a gender-reversed Juliet, on a balcony. He played the coquette and tossed a bunch of roses onto the performance area. Having joined Braxton on the lower stage, al Falak mimicked Braxton's playing stance and emulated a musician with an unwieldy instrument flying from his hand.

Composition No. 96 (Reduction Version) was a showcase for Braxton and his quartet, which included Judy Aba, Lewis Jordan, David Rosenboom and Tyogy Tomita. The severity of the piece was in line with Braxton's cerebral, mathematics-based acoustic experiments in instrument position, tonality and audio relationships. After long, rolling riffs from the piano (Rosenboom), Braxton, conducting like an archer with tensed bow, signaled Jordan, who played the delayed echoes and bursts of sax with ferocity, then gentleness. The ensemble responded exactly to Braxton's geometric conducting signals, establishing order from otherwise polyphonic chaos.

Collaboration #2, a second effort from Braxton and al Falak, varied in sound design from the low bass notes to squeaks in the upper register or reed of the sax. Al Falak walked a thin vertical line, bisecting the performance



sweep/spiral/thrash

area. The pleasure in this piece was in the acknowledgment that dancer and musician made of each other. They each seemed to appreciate the other's presence and effort. Dressed in Battle's Dervish costume, al Falak whirled and cut through the air, using his body in percussive counterpoint to Braxton's music and shifts of wind on sax or clarinet. This was short, solid, moody piece.

The finale, al Falak's *sweep/spiral/thrash*, was an ambitious offering of epic proportions. The piece was probably not suited to collaborative evening, but rather a program of al Falak's works. Braxton's music was relegated to the background, barely present. The CitiCentre Dance Theatre supplied bodies for this piece, and each displayed varying degrees of theatrical believability, movement accomplishment or ability to execute Falak's choreographic demands. The result was a faulty, broadly-played urbanism of a mother's protection of a daughter. There were several indications that al Falak had been influenced by Merce Cunningham's shape-building and Margaret Jenkins' multimedia (sound recordings), but little of this was realized in *thrash* due to the limited sightlines of the space and the rushed feeling exhibited by the dancers.

Four Perspectives indicated something about the best and worst of collaborative offerings: on the one hand three Black artists took risks, and that is always good; on the other, an imbalanced program took some of the sheen away from a potentially brilliant night.

Carl Hays